

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
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NATHANIEL W. KARNS, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Karen Spilka, Chair
Senate Ways & Means Committee
State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

RE: FY 2019 Budget – Line Item 1599-0026 For a reserve to support municipal improvements

Dear Chair Spilka:

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) respectfully requests that the Senate fully fund the Governor's request of \$10,200,000 for this line item which is critical in providing incentives and services to encourage improvement of operations and efforts to provide services on a shared or regionalized basis by municipal governments. The District Local Technical Assistance Program, the Regionalization and Efficiency Grant Program, and the Community Compact Program are all supported by this line item. Every single municipality in Berkshire County has and will continue to benefit from these programs, but only if the line item is fully funded and maintained in a similar fashion to the past several years. The three programs very intentionally work together to provide incentives and resources to communities to make very definite progress on locally identified needs. If any one of the legs of this stool are eliminated or significantly impacted, the entire stool will be endangered.

Unfortunately, the House budget substantially decreased the funding in this line item to only \$4,845,000 and added fourteen specific projects amounting to \$770,000 which only serves to decrease the amount available to benefit all communities in the State to only \$4,075,000 or only 40% of the Governor's request. The FY 2018 budget provided \$11,450,000 so even the Governor's budget was a reduction in these programs which are needed to make substantial progress in modernizing municipal operations.

In the past, the House had tended to be more supportive of this line item in the budget process than was the Senate. We are very distressed to see the 60% reduction in the House budget which will possibly lead to a gubernatorial veto of the entire line item. We urge the Senate to take the lead in providing full funding to the District Local Technical Assistance, Regionalization and Efficiency Grants, and Community Compact programs to at least the Governor's level. Without

this funding, almost all of the direct work of BRPC supporting key municipal initiatives, including those that support housing production and economic development, will have to be terminated. Legislative requests for specific local priority projects should only be added if additional funding is added to support them and they should not be allowed to decrease the total available statewide.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathaniel W. Karns", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nathaniel W. Karns, AICP
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Harriett Chandler, President of the Senate
The Honorable Adam Hinds, Senator Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire District
Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies
Mr. Geoffrey Beckwith, Massachusetts Municipal Association